

A  
SECOND LETTER

ADDRESSED TO THE  
*Inhabitants of Warwick,*

IN REPLY TO  
THE REMARKS

UPON  
THE FIRST LETTER,

AND UPON  
*A Letter to the Printer of the Birmingham Gazette.*

BY THE REV. THE VICAR AND THE CURATE  
OF ST. NICHOLAS.

*By William Field,*

Minister of the Protestant Dissenting Chapel, in High-street.

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HE THAT STANDS UPON A SLIPP'RY PLACE,  
MAKES NICE OF NO VILE HOLD TO STAY HIM UP.

*Shakespeare's K. John.*

..... MENDAX INFAMIA TERRET,  
QUEM, NISI MENDOSUM ET MENDACEM? *Hor.*

---

TO WHICH IS ADDED,  
A COPY OF A LETTER TO THE PRINTER OF  
THE BIRMINGHAM GAZETTE.

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*Birmingham,*

PRINTED BY J. THOMPSON;

AND SOLD BY J. JOHNSON, ST. PAUL'S CHURCH-YARD, LONDON.

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SECOND LETTER

ADDRESSED TO THE

INSTITUTION OF THE

THE

THE REMARKS

OF

THE FIRST LETTER

AND

A PAPER IN THE JOURNAL OF THE INSTITUTION OF THE

BY THE REV. J. W. L. AND THE CURATE

OF THE CHURCH OF ST. MARY



1794

PRINTED BY J. W. L. AND THE CURATE

THE INSTITUTION OF THE CHURCH OF ST. MARY

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## THE PREFACE.

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*NOTHING* could have been farther from my intentions, or wishes, at least, than to offer any thing more to the Public, on the low and disagreeable subject of the late shameful proceedings against the Dissenters at Warwick;—proceedings of a different kind, indeed, but originating in the same bad spirit that kindled the fires of Birmingham.

But a new and serious charge “of publishing to “the world the most notorious falsehoods,” having been lately exhibited against me, by Mr. Miller and Mr. Laugbarne, the one the Vicar and the other the Curate of St. Nicholas, the principal actors in this scene of littleness and iniquity; some reply to it, no doubt, will be expected from me. At one time I had been led to entertain the hope of being able to assert my innocence, in the most open and public manner, in a court of justice: but in this I have since been disappointed. I have thought it necessary, therefore, to come forward, once more, and to offer a second vindication of myself and of my friends; which

*which I now present to the inhabitants of Warwick; and through them, to all whose attention may have been drawn to this affair, and especially to all into whose hands the "Remarks" of Mr. Miller and Mr. Laugharne, may happen to fall\*. And it is my hope and wish, that I shall not have any farther occasion to appear before the Public, in relation to a business,—with which I confess I am completely tired and disgusted.*

*I am happy, however, in having this fair opportunity of doing justice to my townsmen; by declaring, that they do by no means generally approve of the proceedings of which I complain. It is much to be wished, indeed, that some of them, men of character and influence, had spoken out on this occasion, more openly and boldly than they have thought proper to do. Hardly can they be called the real friends of any cause, who see it exposed and injured by the blind zeal of others, and at the same time refuse to interpose; lest they should be thought cold and disaffected themselves. And yet too many of my fellow-townsmen, enemies to every kind and every degree of intolerance, as indeed all wise and enlightened friends of the church must be, I fear, have acted on this cautious principle.*

\* So solicitous have Mr. Miller and Mr. Laugharne been to circulate their Pamphlet, that it is delivered at all the Book-sellers gratis, and has even been handed about the streets of Birmingham like a common hand-bill.



*I am sensible, it will not become me to say much, with respect to the conduct of the Dissenters themselves, on this occasion. The writer of an anonymous letter, which I have lately received, complains that they have been in his opinion, much too tame and unresisting, in this business. He thinks they have given greater importance to Mr. Miller's strange charges, than they deserved; and that they have condescended too much in expostulating with the high church bigots, as he calls them, who assembled at the Court House. Such high proceedings on the one part, should have met, he says, with more spirit on the other. Indeed if the Dissenters have erred at all, it certainly is on this side. And even then, it may be said for them, that they were actuated by a wish of preserving peace, if possible, without relinquishing their own rights;—which indeed ought to be with every man, sacred.*

*No persons, however, will accuse the Dissenters of having proceeded with any thing like heat or intemperance in the business. Many gross provocations and much ill-treatment they have received, in the course of it: but they will appear to have acted with some degree of firmness, I hope, and at the same time with moderation and forbearance. Fortiter in re et suaviter in modo, if I do not deceive myself, has been their maxim; or in plain English, they have maintained their point, without losing their own temper, or wantonly incensing that of their opposers.*

*Let*

*Let any one look into the paper presented to the gentlemen at the Court House, and which the anonymous writer just mentioned, calls a "paper of excuse;" and let him say whether it was not evidently intended to pacify and quiet angry and passionate men (for such were too many churchmen at that "moment of riot and drunken delirium") and with "a soft answer to turn away wrath." And the second letter addressed, through Mr. Bird, to the same gentlemen, contains a proposal, which I should not have thought any man could have found in his heart to pronounce "unsatisfactory;" which yet these gentlemen have not scrupled to do. But the plain fact is, notions of superior rank and of exclusive rights (two of the most fascinating things in nature) are so deeply fixed in the minds of some Church-of-England-men, as they call themselves, that they will hardly be satisfied (if we must come to that) I fear, till the degraded Dissenters have formally renounced all their just claims, as beings of a common nature; and shall consent, with one accord to crouch like slaves, or to kiss the ground before them, as Mr. Bruce has lately told us is the custom in Abyssinia. The Dissenters themselves, I hope, however, may be allowed to take comfort in the persuasion, that subjects of polity and liberty begin to be too generally understood (whatever may be the case with some, whose interest blinds, or whose prejudices mislead them) to admit of the long continuance of any unwise and unjust distinctions in favour of one set of men and to the disadvantage*

advantage of another—when they are all equally peaceable, useful and deserving members of society.

But I must turn from this pleasing thought, to a less agreeable subject. It is not my intention to anticipate the reflections, which my readers will probably make, in perusing the following pages. They will there meet with some things which I could almost wish for the honour of our nature, to have “hidden from the eyes of all living;” but which my own vindication makes it necessary to disclose. I believe, it has not been thought that my former address to the inhabitants of Warwick, was written with an undue warmth of temper. But in the following Letter, as well as in that to the Printer of the Birmingham Gazette (a copy of which accompanies it) it will be seen, I have allowed myself to assume a style of greater severity—though not greater than the occasion, I am confident, will abundantly justify.

And how happy shall I think myself—if any thing I have said on this disagreeable occasion, should serve, in the smallest degree to vindicate the characters of injured men, to expose injustice and fraud, to shame meanness, to repress insolence, to unite divided neighbours, in peace and good-will, and to promote even in the small circle of this town, the christian spirit of candour and charity!

WARWICK,  
December 26, 1791.





## A SECOND LETTER, &c.

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MY TOWNSMEN AND NEIGHBOURS,

**BEFORE** your tribunal and that of the Public, I am arraigned of having “boldly and unblushingly advanced, in some late publications, the most notorious falsehoods; reflecting on the characters of two of your clergymen, the Vicar and Curate of St. Nicholas.”

What I have said, I readily admit, I have said “with a bold and unblushing assurance” (not without *blushing*, however, at the proceedings which I have thought it right to expose) and that I have published many things to the world, which bear hard upon the honour

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and honesty of my reverend accusers, especially of one of them, I certainly cannot deny. But the *rest* of the charge, I am ready to answer to;—and I do not desire better judges, in this cause, than those to whom, in particular, the appeal is now made.

In a Letter to the Printer of the Birmingham Gazette, I have stated that Mr. Miller, aided and abetted by his associate Mr. Laugharne, attempted to draw away two young children of the name of *Penn*, admitted into the Dissenting school at a time when they were refused admittance into any other; first by offering money, and next by threatening to turn both parents and children out of the parish. In answer to this, you have in your hands an *affidavit* of the parents themselves; in which they declare, that Mr. Miller never made any such offers to them, that he never used any such threats, and that they *never gave any*  
*such*

*such account*, either to me or to any other person. On the strength of this, I am accused of advancing a *known* falsehood.

I should certainly have replied, much sooner, to such a serious charge, supported in such a serious manner, as this. But I deferred it, with the expectation of being able to make a public appeal in my own vindication, to the justice of my country, in a court of common law. That one of the persons, to whom the above oath was administered, has PERJURED herself, I have full proof. But the oath itself, I am advised, is not a *legal* oath; so that it is the opinion of an eminent counsel \*, whom I have con-

\* The following are his words:

“ *False swearing* in a voluntary affidavit (though a “ conscientious) is not a *legal* perjury. Nor can any “ prosecution or other proceeding at law, be main- “ tained against any of the parties on account of this “ affidavit.” I fancy if Mr. Miller had not been pretty well informed that *these* oaths, are *not* oaths, in the eye of the law, he would hardly have ventured to produce them.

sulted, and whose answer I have this moment received, that in this case an action will not lie.

I must therefore content myself with declaring, in this most public manner, that I received the account precisely as I have stated it, IN THE PRESENCE OF TWO UNEXCEPTIONABLE WITNESSES, from one of the persons, both of whom now deny upon oath, that they ever gave to me any such account. For the full satisfaction of all who may wish to make further enquiries into this matter, the names of these two witnesses, who will be found to be very respectable persons, are directed to be left with Mr. Tomes, Attorney at Law.

This is an affair, it will be said, of a very dark complexion. But since no person can be supposed capable of taking a solemn oath in confirmation of a known falsehood *for no reason at all*; it will be



be evident to every one, that the poor unhappy woman, in the present case, must have been *strongly tempted* to do it, by some person or persons unknown. And whether a certain gentleman, whose *name* I need not mention, on this occasion, is sufficiently aware of it or not, the suspicion (in spite of the sanctity of his office) must inevitably fall upon him and his reverend coadjutor. What further strengthens this most natural and unavoidable suspicion, with respect to these two persons, is the circumstance of the *daily*, nay I may almost say, *hourly visits*, which the woman herself acknowledges to have received from them, for a considerable time, previous to her taking the oath in question ;—a circumstance too, confirmed by many of her neighbours.

What will be your feelings, my townsmen, when you come to read this, and to reflect upon it, I will not say : but I

own I shudder with *horror* while I write it. That two persons, both of them public teachers of religion and good morals, should bring themselves under a strong suspicion, amounting almost to a positive proof, of having tempted a poor wretch to *perjure herself*; in order to save their own characters, and to blacken mine, is indeed shocking to tell. Truly says Dr. Young,

.....Guilt begun, will fly

To guilt consummate, to be safe.

And much as these reverend gentlemen would rejoice to injure my reputation; I have charity enough for them, to wish they may be able to clear themselves, in this very suspicious case, to their own satisfaction, to that of their ecclesiastical superiors, and to yours.

Before I say any thing, in reply to the rest of the affidavits; I shall call the  
attention

attention of my readers to a circumstance which, I believe, will have great weight with all of them. The charges contained in these affidavits, with a single exception, are the *identical charges* (observe gentle reader) alleged by Mr. Miller against the Dissenters, at a conference, expressly appointed for the purpose; at which I assisted, and an account of which I have given in my former letter addressed to you. (See page 19, second edit.) What I have there affirmed, I shall here beg leave to repeat,—“ that the three clergymen, “ and especially Mr. Miller, *expressly declared* that the whole affair” (meaning of these charges) “ was cleared up to “ their entire satisfaction.” Now what must the world think of this man of shameless effrontery, who comes forward with a set of charges in his hands, which he *knows* to be unfounded; or what comes to the same thing, which he declared in my hearing and in the hearing of two respectable friends, to have been

*answered to his entire satisfaction?*\* For my part I can scarcely bring myself to give the smallest attention to these things or to any thing else, advanced by a man who can BELIE HIMSELF, in so gross and palpable a manner, not even when attested by his *oath*, or that of a few poor ignorant wretches, previously prepared for it by himself.

However, as these affidavits are now published to the world, and Mr. Miller no doubt wishes them to gain credit; though he well knows every thing contained in them, to be either false or frivolous (that is, if we may believe Mr. Miller himself) I shall make a few re-

\* When Mr. Miller has been closely pressed with this circumstance, I am told, his reply generally is, "that fresh matter came out afterwards." But where is this fresh matter? Nothing in these affidavits can be called *fresh matter*, except the silly story of the Church and Steeple. Every thing else contained in them, was expressly urged against us and replied to, at the conference above-mentioned, and that, as Mr. Miller said, *to his entire satisfaction*.

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marks upon them. Now it must weaken, in some small degree, the credit of all Mr. Miller's witnesses, that the first and one of the most material of them all, has been proved guilty of false swearing: and in this case, a certain reverend gentleman himself, whom I have before alluded to in this connection, cannot but be strongly suspected of the black crime of *suborning* it. Of the rest, I am authorized to say, that *one* would have also been proceeded against at common law, as a perjurer, if such an action could have been maintained; the evidence in the case being very sufficient\*; and that *two* are not known and have never been so much as seen (let every one give me what credit he pleases) by the person†

\* A statement of this evidence may be seen at Mr. Tomes'.

† I need not inform any of the inhabitants of Warwick, that this person is a lady of a most *unimpeachable* character: and whose kind attention to the interests of the poor, it would much better become  
Mr.

against whom they have sworn. And with respect to some things stated in these affidavits, I would observe, the evident *improbability* of them is so great, that even the circumstance of their having been *sworn to*, will hardly be able to gain them much credit; at least with those who are at all acquainted with the parties concerned. Accordingly most of you, I understand, are much more disposed to *smile* at them, than to admit the truth of them.

But there is one material circumstance, to which I must call your particular attention. With all the witnesses brought forward on this occasion, Mr. Miller and Mr. Laugharne are well known to have had frequent intercourse, both before and on the day of their ap-

Mr. Miller to learn to imitate, than attempt to expose. But

.....Men that make

Envy and crooked malice nourishment,

Dare bite the best.———

pearance

pearance before the magistrate, when in the presence of those two persons and a select party of friends ONLY, they were directed to swear to the particulars stated in these affidavits. Now surely all the acknowledged rules of fairness and equity I ever heard of, require that the *accused party* also should have been allowed to be present on such an occasion, to cross-examine the witnesses, and to see justice done to themselves. But perhaps Mr. Miller's fear was, that the Dissenters would again have cleared up the whole affair to his *entire satisfaction*, and then all his purposes, in spite of himself, would have been at once defeated!

As Mr. Miller has taken care to keep his witnesses so much in the dark; I shall produce one of them before the public, in order that they may be able to form some judgment of the rest. A few days ago, I went in company with two of my friends, to see one *Elizabeth Sutton*,  
whose

whose affidavit will be found among the rest. The moment we made our business known, the woman hung down her head, was silent and fullen; and we began to think that we should know no more of her, than we could learn from her person and appearance. But at length, after much questioning, she raised herself up and firmly declared that she had never taken *any oath* at all relating to this business, and that she had never been before a magistrate "since the last corn harvest." My friends and I looked upon each other with astonishment, though one of us had heard her husband declare as much before her, but it turns out (what indeed was most likely) that *he* knows nothing at all of the matter. Afterwards, however, upon being closely pressed, she admitted that she *had* taken the oath in question; but gave us plainly to understand that nothing but the persuasions of Mr. Laugharne *could* have induced her to do it, with whose wishes, she



she intimated, " she thought herself  
" bound to comply." Next she said, she  
had never been asked at all to take the  
oath, till she was carried before the mag-  
istrate; who sat at Mr. Miller's house  
(in some *dark closet* perhaps) and was  
there, for the first time, desired to do it.  
And last of all she *utterly denied* to have  
sworn to some particulars stated in the  
affidavit, which I read over to her; she  
herself, poor woman,\* not being able to  
read or write. Here, my good friends,  
is a curious *specimen* of Mr. Miller's set  
of oath-takers; on whose credit, he is  
willing to vindicate his own character  
and to blast mine!

With respect to the *parents* of the  
children belonging to the Dissenting  
school, I have already stated the whole

\* It is worthy of remark, that no entreaties have  
been able to prevail with this woman to *face* the  
person against whom she has sworn. Are we to  
ascribe this to a consciousness of guilt, or to the pru-  
dent advice of Mr. Miller and Mr. Laughton?

of

of the case in the Letter addressed to you (page 15) I have just looked over what I have there said; I am entirely satisfied with it, and have nothing of consequence to add to it. Where my account is contradicted by that now laid before you (as it certainly is in some particulars) the public have only to chuse between *my plain narration* and *Mr. Miller's oaths*; and they are undoubtedly at full liberty to give credit to which of them, they may think, *on the whole*, best entitled to it. As, however, some persons may possibly be inclined to lay a *particular* stress upon the solemnity of an oath, I shall beg leave to remind them of a saying of Dr. Jortin, "It may be as truly affirmed of a knave as of an honest man, that his word is as good as his oath."

Before I dismiss the subject of these oaths, I cannot help calling your notice to one *singular charge*, which the enemies of the Dissenters wish (but vainly wish)

wish) to fix upon them. One of the persons examined before the committee appointed to support the established church in this borough (or in other plainer words, the committee appointed to *barrass* and *oppress* the Dissenters in this borough) declared to me, that she was closely questioned—Whether her children had not been ILL-USED while they belonged to the Dissenting school? But to the great disappointment of the reverend chairman, who conducted this examination, the poor woman, though she had sworn to many other things, equally true, could not be brought to swear to *this*!!

Now surely, my friends, if men are to seek out with such *malicious eagerness*, for charges against their neighbours, you cannot be surprised if they should find them; aye, and persons too, to *swear* point-blank to them. At this rate you must not wonder if we, whom you now take

take to be honest and respectable men, should hereafter be proved *upon oath* to be no better than vagabonds, rogues, or shoplifters. One great comfort, however, (thank God and our country) we have still left us; we can neither be *transported* nor *hanged* without having an opportunity, at least to face our accusers, and to answer for ourselves.

Some gentlemen of the committee, I have been told, who are in a horrible fright lest the poor should become wiser than themselves, have generously bestowed a few *hard epithets* upon me (or perhaps hearty curses) because I amuse myself one evening in the week, with instructing a number of poor children in the use of their pen, and in the knowledge of figures. And (between ourselves) I begin to be afraid that I shall ere long be found guilty *upon oath* of teaching them to write treason, or to compose thundering philippics against the church,

or



or perhaps to draw lines of circumvallation around consecrated buildings. Indeed, some violent suspicions of this kind, I take it, must have been the ground of that *dreadful alarm* into which the clergy were once so suddenly thrown, and which they so feelingly described in a certain memorable hand-bill. Fortunately for us, however, who are the weaker party, their fellow-churchmen did not enter into *all* their feelings upon that occasion.

I was also informed, some time ago, that Mr. Laugharne, had been pleased to make some very *free remarks*, upon my having been present at the late ill-fated Revolution dinner in Birmingham. And young as I am, it is no great crime, I hope, that I know enough of the value of liberty, and feel sufficient interest in the happiness of all people, to rejoice (whether such men as Mr. Laugharne will rejoice with me or not) that a great nation "wills to be free." However, as

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Mr.

Mr. Laugharne's profound sagacity \* can see no difference between a friend to the French revolution and a traitor to the English government, I begin to think that I shall next be accused *upon oath* of conspiring to subvert our excellent constitution. And, oh! should it ever be discovered that I am the son of a certain English usurper, who murdered the royal

\* The mention of Mr. Laugharne's profound sagacity, brings to my recollection the following curious *sample* of it. This good gentleman was once called upon to baptize a dying infant---which happily lived, however, till this important rite was duly performed. Having done this part of his duty, the reverend minister of consolation began to congratulate the parents on the *narrow escape* (from eternal damnation, I suppose he meant) of this poor little innocent babe, alike unconscious of its imminent danger or of its fortunate deliverance; and hence was naturally led to insist upon the *absolute necessity* of this ceremony in these circumstances. After patiently listening to such wise and holy discourse for some time, one of the parents (who was a Quaker's servant) broke *out into* the following short exclamation, but to which I fancy it would puzzle our knowing divine to find a ready answer-----"Bless me, Sir, says he; if what you say "be true, what will become of my master, for he never "thinks of being baptized at all!"

and

and blessed martyr, I am undone. In that case, you may assuredly expect to hear that I am convicted (upon the oath of Mr. Laugharne himself perhaps) before the committee of Churchmen, whose loyalty is hardly to be shaken, *of aspiring to the throne!*\*

To dismiss this affair of the affidavits with perfect seriousness. Nothing can be plainer, my townsmen, than that Mr. Miller and Mr. Laugharne, the contrivers of this horrid scheme, and their sup-

\* Mr. Madan, the *sæviens sacerdos* of Birmingham, thinks it absolutely certain that the whole race of Dissenters are *king-killers*; because, as he will have it, they are all lineally descended from king Charles's murderers. Alas! what shall I say for *myself*? For the line of my ancestors, on the female side, may fairly and clearly be traced up (ah me!) to CROMWELL HIMSELF. Mr. Madan being my judge, the eloquence of an Erskine, I fear, would hardly save me. See Noble's *Memoirs of the Protectorate Family*, 2 vols. second edition. The first edition of this work was published, before the author made himself known to the few surviving branches of the Cromwell family; to whom he is indebted for some valuable communications, to be found in the second edition.

porters both of the clergy and laity, have conceived a strange and most unreasonable dislike to us, unfortunate but innocent Dissenters; and that they would be glad to do us any injury in the world. The law of our country (for which we are very thankful) forbids them to molest our persons or to invade our property, (though Mr. Miller has even threatened *that*) and therefore all they can do, is to interrupt our quiet with little broils, or to injure our reputation by low calumnies; which, you see, is the very thing they are now attempting to do. In this case we can only throw ourselves, with full confidence, upon your justice and generosity. With the characters of most of us, you are all well acquainted; and you will admit they are such as no man need be ashamed to appeal to. Allow us to hope, therefore, that you will not too easily give ear to the *vile scandals* which our ungenerous foes daily invent and propagate to our disadvantage; availing



availing themselves of that sacred character which gives them a title to respect and credit. And when they find that their base insinuations and bold assertions are not much attended to, we trust you will not be greatly surprized, if they should have recourse to *oaths* (lying generally needs the support of cursing and swearing) and even if they should procure a number of poor, ignorant wretches to assemble in a private room, and to swear—to what they please.

But if any thing more is thought necessary to be done in this case, we only ask, that it may be done in open day (not at Mr. Miller's house, nor in the dark) that fair and impartial judges may be chosen, that the accused as well as the accusing party shall be permitted to be present; and then we doubt not, we shall be able to clear ourselves to your entire satisfaction (as we once did to Mr. Miller's)—if indeed we have not done it sufficiently already.

Having now entirely done with Mr. Miller's oaths, I come to Mr. Miller's pamphlet, on which I promised, some time ago\*, to give you a few remarks; and I now promise you, they shall be very few and very short; thinking the thing itself hardly worthy of my notice.

You have observed, no doubt, with some surprize, that through the whole of it, though expressly writing in vindication of himself, Mr. Miller makes no sort of reply to the many serious charges, which I have brought against him. I have accused him of acting a *double part*; first applauding the endeavours of the Dissenters to instruct the poor, and then attempting to hinder and obstruct those laudable endeavours. I have accused him of using what he may call fair, upright, and honourable means of drawing away the children from the Dissenting school, but what I must beg leave to call low,

\* In a hand-bill distributed in the town.

vile, and detestable arts, unworthy of any man; such as threatening to deprive the parents of their work, and of the bread, coals, &c. provided for them at the public expence. I have accused him of reporting false charges, and what he *acknowledged* to me to be such. Above all, I have accused him of using the most horrid threats of violence, with a view to terrify the Dissenters into a compliance with his insolent demands.† These and some other serious charges, I have al-

† The whole dispute respecting the Dissenting Sunday school was settled, as Mr. Miller said to his *entire satisfaction*, previous to the Birmingham riots. But very soon after the news of those unfortunate disturbances reached Warwick, Mr. Miller assembled a number of churchmen at his own house, and summoned two of the Dissenters to meet them; with one of whom he retired into a private apartment, and informed him that the object of this meeting was to “insist that the Sunday school belonging to the Dissenters should be shut up;” assuring him, at the same time, “that if this was not done, their meeting-house and their dwelling houses would be destroyed.” Upon returning to the rest of the company, Mr. Miller took the other Dissenter aside and *whispered* to him the same dreadful intelligence.

leged against Mr. Miller himself; but to all this, you see, he thinks proper to *say* nothing---you will naturally think because he *hath* nothing to say.

One curious part of the pamphlet, no doubt, you have particularly noticed. Mr. Miller speaks, p. 23, "of amicable conferences which unhappily ended, he" "says, without the desired effect." Now what precise effect *he* desired, he best knows. But if you will turn to my Letter to Mr. Bird, p. 28, you will there see a proposal on the part of the Dissenters, "to suffer no children to continue in their school, but those whose parents upon proper enquiry, should *expressly desire* it." Will any of you, my townsmen, say, that this is not such a concession as ought to have *satisfied* any reasonable man? Most of you, I am persuaded, will acknowledge that this is *all* that could possibly be asked, with any appearance of decency, in such a case, of the Dissenters, or of  
any



any set of men. But it seems to be Mr. Miller's opinion, that, though we Dissenters have certainly the form, and all the appearance of human creatures, yet nevertheless, we must be a part of some inferior species of beings, not entitled to the common rights and usages of men—a sort of *tame animal*, perhaps, created for the diversion of haughty and insolent vicars and curates!

In another part of his pamphlet (p. 23) Mr. Miller speaks of “encroachments upon his own congregation,” and makes a curious distinction “between defending and invading,”—by all which he means to tell you, that most of the children belonging to the Dissenting school were drawn away from those of the church; and therefore, he thinks it right to draw them back again. I will own to you, I am perfectly astonished that any man, or any two men, upon earth, can venture to talk in this way, in the face of a whole town, where it is well known

known (I speak with a bold and unblushing assurance) that most of the children were admitted into this school, at a time when they were absolutely excluded by an express rule, from those of the church, as being the children of non-parishioners\*. Yet now you see Mr. Miller and Mr. Laugharne have the assurance (whether blushing or unblushing, I cannot tell) to come forward and to charge us with seducing them away; and the unparalleled impudence to require us to dismiss them, against the express wishes both of the parents and the children. And they have found a set of men too, who have the strange weakness to admit the truth and justice of what they say; or the low contrivance and little art to pretend to do so.

\* Of about one hundred and twenty children admitted into the Dissenting school since its first institution to the present time, no less a proportion than one hundred were admitted before the rule was rescinded, which excluded them from those of the church. And of this number, many who had obtained admittance into the Church schools before the existence of that rule, were dismissed by the managers themselves in consequence of it,

What would you think, my good friends, of a man who first throws away his purse; then charges the person who happens to take it up, with robbing him of it; and next remands it with taunts and insults? Something like this, is the conduct of your two clergymen. They first refuse to admit children of a certain description into their schools; then, they accuse us of seducing these same children away; and last of all, they insult us and threaten our poor children; because, forsooth, *they* do not like to go from us, and *we* do not like to drive them away by main force. And what is the most wonderful of all to tell, for this fair, manly, upright, and judicious conduct, to be sure, one of these gentlemen has already received the thanks of a grave assembly of churchmen, and the other has certainly a right to expect the same!

Oh judgment! thou art fled to brutish beasts,  
And men have lost their reason..—————

I shall

I shall next call the attention of my readers to what Mr. Miller tells (page 23) of his *great success* in drawing away children from the Dissenting school, “We have been so fortunate,” he says, “as to recover many of our people, by the most upright and honourable means.” Observe, he *speaks* of these people as if they were a kind of *property* of his own (like the hat on his head) which was lost, perhaps on the road, and is now found; or pledged at a *pawnbroker’s*, and since fairly redeemed. And what is worse still, Mr. Miller *treats* these people, as if he had a kind of property in them; by refusing them a will of their own. But though Mr. Miller talks, with so much self-complacency, of what he has done with respect to these people; if he will listen for a moment to me, I will tell him he has done *that*, which any other man besides himself would *blush to own*. For Mr. Miller very well knows, that all the children he has taken from the Dissenting school,



school, have left it *against* their own free choice, and that of their parents;—or why did he decline our proposal of dismissing them, in case they should be inclined to go? In fact, the *exulting air* with which Mr. Miller speaks of what he has done, clearly shews that it was done with difficulty, and required some adroitness. “We have been so fortunate,” he says, “as to recover many of our people;”—plainly intimating, that this was more than he could have well expected to do; or than could have been done, without considerable management on his part. Indeed, many of these people yielded with so much reluctance to Mr. Miller’s base and barbarous purposes, that when they found themselves obliged to withdraw their children from this school, I have been well informed, they were in the greatest *distress*, and the children themselves in *agonies* of grief, for many days. Now I must say, the very attempt to force children, by any means (there  
can

can be no honourable means in this case) from a school, where they were well pleased to go, and where their parents were well satisfied to send them, is in itself PERVERSE AND CRUEL;—it is such an attempt as no man, not lost to all sense of justice and tenderness, to all feeling of propriety and common decorum, would ever have *thought* of. It is an exploit, of which Mr. Miller may boast as long as he pleases (even thieves and robbers sometimes boast of what they do) but which I venture to affirm, can give satisfaction to the *heart* of none—but an Arabian ruffian, or an African slave-driver.

In another part of his book (page 21) Mr. Miller seems willing to draw the attention of his readers to *myself*, as well as to my Letter. “From what has been “produced,” says he, “the public will be “sufficiently enabled to form their opinion of Mr. Field.” Now what opinion  
the

the public have formed, or may form of me, or whether the public will form any opinion at all in the case, I pretend not to determine. But being a very young man, just entered into the wide world, and who have not been hitherto much exposed to dangerous temptations; I believe I may say, that I have not *yet* given into any very irregular practices, and that my character *at present* will bear a pretty close inspection. Whether this may be the case with Mr. Miller's, you who know better than I do, can much better say. Reports tell many *strange things* to be sure, but reports are often false and unfounded; and into the truth of these, I have never taken the trouble to enquire. Once, indeed, I was in Mr. Miller's company; and then I remember, I did not conceive a very favourable idea of him, as a clergyman, from the shamefully light and trifling manner, in which he allows himself to use that *great and awful name*, which we Dissenters think  
ought

ought never to be mentioned, but with the profoundest reverence. And he will hardly think that his behaviour since that time, has at all contributed to raise him in my estimation, or in that of any one else (whose esteem is worth any thing) either as a clergyman, or even as a man of common sense and feeling.—However, Mr. Miller should certainly have well considered, before he had offered to strike the first blow at my character, whether *his own* will bear one in return.

I was a good deal surprized, I confess, with what Mr. Miller says (p. 23) of “his being influenced in these proceedings by a *regard to the Dissenters*.” Indeed, if I am not much misinformed, Mr. Miller has some *reason* to cherish a regard for the Dissenters. For at a time when the foulest aspersions were thrown upon his own character (and such as if founded in truth, would prove him to be a monster) the Dissenters were the persons,

as



as most of you may remember, who stepped forward to say, what could be said in his vindication; and by their warmth in defending him, some of them brought upon themselves, much ridicule and abuse. So that if Mr. Miller has not some little *regard* for the Dissenters; the Dissenters might complain of his ingratitude; as well as of the injustice of some late proceedings against them. And even for his *professions* of regard, the Dissenters would feel themselves much obliged to him; if they could find any sort of agreement between his actions and his words. But here is the puzzle.

It was Mr. Miller's *regard* for the Dissenters, we will suppose, that induced him to appoint what he calls "amicable conferences" (with which the whole business began) in order to enquire into the truth of some strange reports, raised against them. And indeed so far, all was fair enough. But when he had

D                      heard

heard *their* account of the matter; had declared himself fully satisfied with it; and had passed the highest compliments (*latet anguis in herba*) upon their zeal and charity: what did his regard for the Dissenters next lead him to do? Did he go and contradict reports, he knew to be unfounded; which would have been common justice at least? Alas! nothing like it. These very reports (Oh monstrous! monstrous!) Mr. Miller took pains to spread abroad; to place in the most unfair and unfavourable lights; and endeavoured, of his *kind regard* for the Dissenters to inflame a whole town against them, where they had long lived in the greatest repute and peace!

Afterwards, when the lives and property of their friends at Birmingham were devoted to the savage rage of a drunken mob: what did Mr. Miller's *regard* for the Dissenters lead him to do? Nothing less, than to make a *cruel attack*  
upon

upon them in that moment of affright and distress; and to threaten the same destruction to their houses and their property also, if they did not yield to his insolent mandate: like the rascal, who demands your money or your life; with this difference that Mr. Miller demanded, out of his *great regard* for the Dissenters, what is of more value to them (Mr. Miller may stare) than either money or life. Such, my good friends, is Mr. Miller's *regard* for the Dissenters. But from you, I hope, we shall meet with *another sort* of regard or we shall be wretched indeed? \*

\* In justice to Mr. Miller, I will just tell the following little story. At the time, when dreadful news arrived every hour from Birmingham; this good man went to a friend of mine and desired him "for G——'s sake, to get Mr. Field out of the way, " for that he is known to have been at the Birmingham revolution-dinner, and that his life is in danger." And then he added (observe the *reason* why " he wished so much to get Mr. Field out of the way) " whatever you do for G——'s sake give up your " Sunday school, or, I tell you, you will have your " meeting-

I have little more to say on the subject of Mr. Miller's pamphlet. It is, altogether a wonderful production. And, if it does not provoke serious disapprobation, it may perhaps be a subject of some ridicule and laughter; though, indeed, I rather fancy, it can hardly excite any thing more than silent wonder and contempt. There are in it, so many instances of weakness, incoherence, absurdity, and folly; as amount almost to a proof, in my estimation, of positive ideotism, or absolute insanity. To say the best of it, it is a preposterous defence of a preposterous business. And nothing but the many solemn *oaths* attached to it,

“meeting-house and your dwelling-houses pulled down.” And this advice I came to give you, says he, with a jesuistical shake of the head, out of “*pure friendship!*” This is not the first time, my readers will observe, that Mr. Miller held forth the same threatening language. (See Note, p. 23.) And I could name one other Dissenter, at least, in whose hearing Mr. Miller threw out the same threats of violence, accompanied with such language as would disgrace a common Billingsgate.

and



and particularly the charge pending upon the first, could have led me to take any manner of notice of it.

By the postscript at the end, it should seem, that the whole of this curious performance, was submitted to the inspection and published with the approbation, perhaps by the express order, of the Committee formed to support the church (one should think the church is actually *falling*) in this borough. Otherwise, I would have seriously proposed it to the consideration of these gentlemen, that in future, all performances so extremely poor, weak and contemptible, as this before me, should be absolutely suppressed, by their authority; as tending to bring down disgrace upon the church, of which they are the appointed guardians. If my voice could be heard in such an august assembly (the collected wisdom of the town of Warwick) I would loudly tell them——That a single

injudicious friend, is often more to be dreaded, than a whole host of enemies.

That you, my good friends, may all see in what a truly ridiculous point of view your two clergymen, together with their noble band of divines, esquires and doctors, all stout and valorous champions of the church, have placed themselves in the eyes of the world; I shall transcribe a note for your perusal, from a book entitled "A Letter to the Right Honourable Edmund Burke, by George Rous, Esq. in reply to his appeal from the new to the old Whigs." Page 49. You will perceive there is a little mistake in the latter part of it; Warwick being in the diocese of Worcester.

' It were improper to suspect any part  
' of the clergy of wishing this calamity  
' (i. e. the Birmingham riots) yet the  
' christian charity of many could not re-  
strain

‘ strain their exultation when the cala-  
‘ mity fell on those who, doubtless, were  
‘ “finners above all the Galileans.” One  
‘ instance in which the zeal of the church  
‘ was opposed to good works, deserves to  
‘ be recorded. At Warwick some un-  
‘ godly Dissenters had admitted into their  
‘ school certain children whom the church  
‘ schools had rejected. They clothed  
‘ these children and instructed them, not  
‘ in controversial divinity, but in the ru-  
‘ diments of christianity. It was even  
‘ proved that these wicked Dissenters  
‘ sometimes had given money to the chil-  
‘ dren most diligent in their learning, and  
‘ to the whole company a dinner every  
‘ Sunday. This *seduction* from the church  
‘ created alarm. A worthy clergyman  
‘ required them to shut up their school,  
‘ and doubtless, in the excess of his zeal  
‘ hinted “some dreadful consequences” of  
‘ their obstinacy, “a meeting-house and  
‘ “dwellings of their own that may pos-  
‘ sibly in their turn be destroyed.” Four  
‘ more

‘ more reverend churchmen, with other  
‘ wise men of Gotham\* assembled, and  
‘ gravely voted “ that he had supported  
“ the character of a conscientious and  
“ good christian, and that the thanks of  
“ this meeting are due to him for his up-  
“ right and judicious conduct.” It is but  
‘ justice to add, that Dr. Cornwallis,  
‘ Bishop of Lichfield and Coventry inter-  
‘ posed, in a manner highly becoming his  
‘ high station.

My generous townsmen, I cannot prevail upon myself to conclude this second Address to you, without returning you my thanks, and those of my friends, for the candid attention you have been pleased to give the subject of my first—a subject, with respect to which, a very natural and laudable *partiality* must have

\* “Wise men of Warwick” I am told begins to be a current expression. Possibly in time, it may rival the celebrity of the “wise men of Gotham,” and perhaps at length, obtain a place in the same rank with it.

inclined



inclined most of you to wish that *your*  
*clergy* might be right.

But though friends to the church, yet as cool and steady friends, I am sure, you can never approve of the blind, intemperate, frantic zeal of Mr. Miller, and Mr. Laugharne, and their committee of abettors;—a zeal which hurries them into the most criminal excesses; and leads them, under the pious pretence of supporting the church, to violate the plainest and most acknowledged rules of equity and decorum. In my humble opinion, you would do right to tell them (*such* advice from me they would hardly attend to) that a much better way of supporting the credit of the church, is, by fair reasoning and argument, by moderation (or justice at least) towards Dissenters, and above all, by leading a CHASTE, SOBER, AND VIRTUOUS LIFE. But as for briberies, threatenings, perjuries, pulling down houses, and turning out of parishes, and

and other such things,—I hope, for the honour of the church, we shall hear no more of them.

Wishing that your clergy may discover a little more of good sense, fairness, and candour, in their future proceedings against Dissenters (no unfriendly wish I hope)

I remain,

My generous townsmen and neighbours,

Your very humble servant,

WILLIAM FIELD.

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COPY OF A LETTER  
TO  
THE PRINTER  
OF THE  
*BIRMINGHAM GAZETTE.*

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## COPY OF A LETTER

TO

*The Printer of the Birmingham Gazette.*

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### MIRABILE DICTU!

Mr. Printer,

**T**HE *nature* of the difference between some of the members of the Church and the Dissenters, at Warwick, is now, I believe, pretty well understood by most of the readers of your paper. So little of fairness, honour, and decency; and even of common justice, appeared in the proceedings of one of the clergy, Mr. Miller, in this new and singular affair, that I found myself obliged, some time since, to make an appeal to the inhabitants at large, in a Letter which is now before the public. To what I have there stated of Mr. Miller's unworthy and disgraceful conduct, in the course of this business, I am truly sorry to have occasion to add an account of a *recent transaction*, which is just come to my knowledge. By this it will appear, that he and one other clergyman with him, are determined to *persist* in measures

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which

which have called forth the just indignation, not of my particular friends only, but of all sober and thinking men, whether Churchmen or Dissenters, in Warwick or out of it.

It is now, Mr. Printer, about three or four months since our sagacious priest first discovered that the credit of his own school could never be firmly established, but upon the *ruins* of that of the Dissenters. Having failed in a daring attempt to *overthrow* it, by acts of open violence and bare-faced injustice; it will now be seen that he, supported by his own curate, is still endeavouring to *undermine* it, by more concealed but not less unfair and dishonourable methods.

Your readers will please to be informed, that two young children of the name of *Pena* had been admitted into the Dissenting school, nearly at the time of its first institution; and therefore, being the children of non-parishioners, at a time when they were not admissible into the Church schools. To the parents of these children, a few weeks ago, the man so much applauded "for his upright and judicious conduct in support of the Church," went; and, failing in his other arts of persuasion, *offered them money*, on the express condition that their children should be taken from the school, to which they

they had belonged from their earliest infancy, and in which the parents declared themselves well satisfied they should still remain. Four shillings for each child, and a promise of some further assistance, were to have been the price of this infamous bargain!

It might be thought absolutely incredible, Mr. Printer, that the *man himself* should descend to the use of *bribery*, in so open and undisguised a manner, who has so often alleged *charges* of this kind against others, on such frivolous grounds and with such apparent disdain. But this, we all know, is too common a case. We all know that the persons, protesting with the greatest vehemence against a fault or a crime in others, are too often found to be the very persons who practice it themselves. Of this miserable weakness and inconsistency, we see a sad example in the Vicar of St. Nicholas.

The ensnaring offers of Mr. Miller, though directed with all the "judgment," or, to speak plain, with all the *poor and pitiful art*, for which he has been so much extolled by his reverend *chairman*, and in which he has since been so successfully imitated by his obsequious *curate*, proved in the present case, it seems, of no avail. From artful promises, therefore, he next proceeded, "in the true spirit of a conscientious  
" and

“and good Christian,” to try the effect of *cruel threats*; declaring that, if his will was not obeyed, and the children withdrawn from the Dissenting school, “both parents and children should be “turned out of the parish!” And to shew a complete and perfect example of *Christian meekness* I suppose, our zealous priest declared, moreover, that with these all other persons also, should be dismissed from the parish, who happened not to be born in it, and who persisted in sending their children to a school, interdicted, I presume he added, by his high ecclesiastical authority \* !

Such, Mr. Printer, are the particulars of an affair, of which, I confess, I cannot even *think*, without the strongest emotions of disgust and

\* I take it for granted, the public are satisfied that the woman *gave me* the account I have here stated: since she did it in the presence of two respectable witnesses, whose names are at any time ready to be produced. And I must be at liberty to say, I am perfectly satisfied that the story is *not* an invention of the woman herself. For I desired her to repeat it several times, and took pains to make her vary in her account: as did the two other persons present. Besides what *motive* could she have to invent such a fiction? For I defy any one to prove that we ever gave *encouragement* to informers; and supposing, for a moment, we had done it in the present instance, the woman being in the hands of our enemies, they would, no doubt, have *availed* them of a circumstance so much to our disadvantage; if it had been in their power. It is true, the woman now contradicts *this account* upon oath; but she also contradicts that she ever *gave it* to me; which is plainly false swearing. But what seems to put the matter beyond all doubt is, that this woman gave partly the same account to a respectable gentleman of this town; to whom I am a perfect stranger, but who declared in a public company that he was ready to *swear to it*, and whose *name* (when properly called upon) I shall think myself  
at



disdain. Such low arts of bribery in a clergyman, such arbitrary and despotic principles in an Englishman, such base and abominable threatenings from a Christian (as they call him) are enough to pain every virtuous feeling, to shock every just and generous principle in the mind, and to make us almost *ashamed* that we are men! \*

Whether Mr. Miller imagines himself sufficiently *authorized*, either by any obsolete law or by the spirit of the times, to *drive* from their homes all persons, chusing to send their children where they think they will be best instructed, I do not know. A few months ago, I should scarcely have hesitated on such a question. A few months ago, I should scarcely have thought it even *possible* that a number of rich, respectable persons, who have done no crime, should be

at liberty to mention. She also gave the whole of this account to another person whose *name* I have directed to be sent to Mr. 'Tomes'; together with the *names* of some other poor persons who have made the same complaints against Mr. Miller, as those stated in this Letter. On the whole I do not think myself at all obliged to *contradict* this account: but having stated it and the evidence for it, I leave it, as Mr. Miller says, "to the impartial judgment of the public."

\* ————O but man! proud man!

Drest in a little brief authority,  
Most ignorant of what he's most assur'd,  
His glassy essence—like an angry ape,  
Plays such fantastic tricks before high heaven,  
As makes the angels weep; who, with our spleens,  
Would all themselves laugh mortal.

burnt out of their houses, as we have seen at Birmingham; or that a number of worthy, industrious poor should be turned out of their parishes, as we are to see at Warwick; at the will of any insolent clergyman in the world. Nor can I yet persuade myself, that the love of liberty and a regard to right are so entirely eradicated from the minds of my countrymen, that they will bear much longer to see such unrighteous and intolerant proceedings; the most so, perhaps, all circumstances considered, of any that have yet been recorded in the pages of history. But if I should find myself mistaken, I shall certainly begin to think it high time, both for the rich and for the poor, who feel in any degree, a regard to the dearest and most valuable rights of men, to leave not Mr. Miller's *parish* only, but Mr. Miller's *country* also, and to seek abroad those just liberties, which we are denied at home.

In this letter I have taken notice of *one* only of Mr. Miller's *unfair attempts* to oppose and ruin the Dissenting school at Warwick. Yet as several children have been withdrawn from it, whose parents had always expressed the greatest satisfaction with the attention they received, and the improvement they made; there is little room to doubt that they were drawn away by such *vile arts* as Mr. Miller shews himself capable of using.

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Of one successful *feat* of this kind, however, dexterously done by his humble admirer and imitator Mr Laugharne, I have received a particular account; of which, if I should have occasion to write again, he may depend upon hearing more from me;\* and which will clearly shew him to be *a curate altogether worthy of such a vicar.*

I own Mr. Printer, I am the more astonished at these proceedings of Mr. Miller and Mr. Laugharne, as I find they are in direct *contradiction* to the advice of their superior; to whom, therefore, as inferior clergymen, both of them owe obedience. I speak on the supposition that the report is *true* of the Bishop's having sent a letter to the members of the church; in which, he is so fair and candid as to *justify* the Dissenters, and so wise and prudent as to recommend that these proceedings against them should be discontinued. †

\* I fancy I have already *sickened* my readers, with the accounts of Mr. Miller's tricks and those of his reverend associate. However, lest I should disappoint Mr. Laugharne, (for these gentlemen make a *boast* of the very things at which I blush) I will just tell that he offered to *cloath* a lad, provided his parents would take him from the Dissenting school. This offer, it may be supposed, was too tempting to be resisted. The lad, I happened to meet the other day; he told me what Mr. Laugharne had promised to give him; but said he had as yet been able to get only a *ragged pair of breeches*. I hope Mr. Laugharne for his honour's sake and for the sake of the poor boy, will perform the rest of his promise.

† That Mr. Miller has received a letter from the Bishop on this subject, I have *good authority* to assert in contradiction to Mr. Daniel. Of the *complexion* of this letter, indeed, I cannot speak  
so

It might be expected that I should make some apology to those of my townsmen and neighbours, many of whom are zealous friends to the church, who dislike as much as I do these proceedings of Mr. Miller, and who may consider this letter as tending again to interrupt that *harmony* which is so peculiarly desirable, among persons residing in the same town. But greatly as I value peace and harmony, I must beg leave to say that I shall never consent to purchase it, by a *tame acquiescence* in measures which I think detestable and wicked. And as long as Mr. Miller or Mr. Laugharne continue to act, at once, in opposition to the plain rules of reason, justice, and common decorum, in contempt of the advice of Bishops, and in defiance of the opinion of all wise and moderate men; I shall never cease to expose their conduct to the execration and abhorrence, which it deserves.

I am, Sir,

Your humble Servant,

WARWICK,  
Oct. 14, 1791.

WILLIAM FIELD.

so decisively; though I think we may make a pretty good guess from the circumstance of Mr. Miller's *keeping it entirely to himself*.

However, with respect to the Bishop's opinion of these proceedings (though there can be little doubt what such a man must think of them) and whether he applauds or whether he condemns the conduct of his clergy, it is a matter that entirely concerns them and not us. And Mr. Daniel is under a great mistake if he imagines that we Dissenters care at all about the opinion of this bishop, or any bishop, *as such*.





